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MAYOR, METRO AGENCIES ANNOUNCE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER DRIVE
Hands On Nashville To Coordinate Effort

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Mayor Karl Dean, the Metropolitan Public Health Department and the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management joined Hands On Nashville today as it announced its largest emergency recruitment drive ever, for more than 4,000 volunteers.

The plan, announced at a joint news conference, calls for Points of Dispensing, or PODs, to be set up across the city if there is an emergency, allowing the Health Department to quickly administer vaccinations or medications to large numbers of citizens. While the Health Department is responsible for opening these PODs in a public health emergency, it has contracted Hands On Nashville to recruit volunteers to help staff these clinics.

"We want Nashville to be the best prepared city in America should a major emergency hit, and being prepared in the case of a medical emergency is certainly part of that preparation," said Mayor Karl Dean. "I am confident that Hands On Nashville's experience with these sorts of projects, along with the volunteer spirit of the people in our community, will make this effort a success."

PODs can be activated for a wide range of medical emergencies, from the outbreak of the pandemic flu and smallpox to health issues caused by bioterrorism. When PODs are activated, volunteers will be contacted and given the option to report to a designated location. Medical personnel will also be present at each POD to oversee volunteers.

"If we ever need to quickly distribute medicine to large numbers of people, we'll need people to help. To be more prepared, we've entered into a partnership with Hands On Nashville to access and mobilize large numbers of volunteers at a moment's notice," said Bill Paul, M.D., director of the Metropolitan Public Health Department.

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“It’s our job to have a plan in place for emergencies,” said Laura Hokenstad, director of the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management. “In the case of PODs, Hands On Nashville will play a big role in ensuring we have the resources to implement this plan.”

By 2010, Hands On Nashville will be responsible for recruiting 4,000 volunteers and training them with the Metro Public Health Department. Volunteers will be required to complete a one-time training session lasting an hour. Sessions are open to participants 16 years and older and will include basic information about POD concepts.

“We’ve been involved in Metro’s disaster response effort for four years, most recently partnering with the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management to coordinate 1,050 Davidson County volunteers’ response to the tornadoes that swept through Williamson, Sumner, Trousdale and Macon counties last February,” said Brian Williams, executive director of Hands On Nashville. “We understand the importance of having volunteers who can quickly respond to an emergency, and we’re already utilizing our resources to recruit these volunteers.”

If you’re interested in becoming a POD volunteer, please call Josh Corlew at (615) 298-1108, ext. 111. Online training will be available starting March 24 on Hands On Nashville’s Web site, www.hon.org. The first physical training session will be held at Grainger’s Elm Tree Drive location on March 31, with additional sessions available each month.

To learn more about the Metropolitan Public Health Department, visit www.health.nashville.gov. To learn more about the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management, visit www.nashville.gov/OEM.

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